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HONOR



A Family Drama in Three Acts

.. By ..

John Franklyn Phillips



Printed by the Author in an Edition of 33 Copies

NEW YORK, 1909



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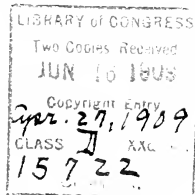
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NEW YORK, 1909

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CHARACTERS:

COLONEL WILLIAM WENDELL, age 45.

EMMA WENDELL, his wife, age 26.

FRANK WENDELL, his son by an earlier marriage,
age 23.

CATHERINE RAPOINT, Frank's half sister, age 25.

PAUL FALLINGTON, Emma's brother, age 28.

AUGUSTUS, the Butler.

TIME: THE PRESENT.

The action of the drama takes place within fourteen and one-half hours.

ACT I.

The study of Colonel Wendell's home on the north shore of Long Island during the month of October. Book cases, etchings and engraved portraits surround the room. In front is a massive library table on which stands a vase filled with roses, an electric lamp, Shakespeare and Tennyson in morocco, and current monthlies. To the left are French windows, with a small writing desk between. Farther back is a door opening into the hall. In the back are folding doors opening into the drawing-room, with pedestals and busts of Longfellow and Whittier on either side. In the right corner is a leather settee. Farther front is an open fireplace, and a mantel which supports a large Swiss clock and silver candelabra. A newly lighted log fire is blazing on the hearth. Heavy chairs of appropriate design and Persian rugs complete the furnishings. The time is eight o'clock in the evening. Catherine is reading Lord Byron's poetry by the electric lamp. Paul comes to the door, stops, sees her, and comes in.

PAUL. I've been looking for you. I thought you had gone upstairs with Emma.

CATHERINE (*looking up, a little annoyed at the interruption*). No, I have been here since dinner.

PAUL (*moving about with an air of importance*). The Colonel has gone to meet Frank. He's in excellent spirits because your brother's coming home to-night. I sincerely hope there will be a complete reconciliation between them.

CATHERINE. Perhaps. One never can tell what

relation may exist between father and son nowadays. They may even be . . . perfectly friendly.

PAUL (*taking her seriously*). We must do everything in our power to make them so. I think that is one reason why the Colonel invited us here to celebrate Frank's home-coming.

CATHERINE. Do you, indeed? Do you think he is afraid of Frank?

PAUL (*standing still*). Afraid of his own son! Good heavens, no! (*Walking over to the fire.*) Colonel Wendell, however, is a man who is keenly sensible to domestic discord; and you know that disgraceful book that Frank published after he left college caused his father bitter sorrow. It was a shameful thing for him to do.

CATHERINE "The Exital Influence of Belief in Honor?" I thought it was a most delightful book. . . It was so entirely devoid of humor.

PAUL (*impatiently*). It was also entirely devoid of a single sane idea. Nevertheless, it made Frank notorious, so that his name got into the newspapers, and his father had to bear the disgrace of it all. You know what an untarnished name the Colonel has carried through his political career. He is one of our few statesmen whose honesty is unquestioned.

CATHERINE. That is very true. It has made him dreadfully conspicuous.

PAUL (*protesting*). I assure you, Catherine, you should not speak lightly of your stepfather's well-deserved reputation. It is dearer to him than life itself. (*Insistently, walking slowly away from her.*) As I said, we must relieve any awkwardness that may arise at first, and after that, natural affection will consummate their reconciliation.

CATHERINE (*laying her book down*). It is very nice of you to be so interested, Paul. Very nice, indeed. Interest is so rare in these socialistic times, I

am told. But are you quite sure you are not too inconsiderate of the Colonel? You know his digestion improved wonderfully after Frank went abroad.

PAUL. Yes, in spite of the estrangement from your brother; certainly not on account of it. (*Going closer to her.*) Just to prove to you that the Colonel has forgiven Frank, I shall tell you something in confidence.

CATHERINE. Take care, Paul. I never repeat things that are told to me in confidence.

PAUL (*missing her subtleness*). Certainly not; I didn't suppose you did. (*Pause.*) Whilst the Colonel and I were playing billiards this afternoon, he told me that he is going to endow a charity hospital in honor of Frank's graduation from Pasteur's Institute.

CATHERINE (*uninterestedly*). How very, very kind of him!

PAUL. So you see he is not so austere as you believed. And, Catherine (*standing beside her chair*), he has offered me the position of secretary.

CATHERINE (*looking up at him*). Do you care to be connected with a charity institution, Paul? Do you really approve of charity?

PAUL (*hurt, moving away*). I certainly do. What a singular question to ask of me. You know I have already dedicated my life to my less fortunate brothers.

CATHERINE. I am so sorry. Unless you are very, very careful, you may . . . actually help them.

PAUL (*with dignity*). To do so is my greatest wish.

CATHERINE. Do not say that, Paul. To help the poor shows such extreme partiality. I think it is much nicer to give them useless presents on Christmas.

PAUL (*with warmth*). I assure you, Catherine, that you are wrong. To assist those in need is the loftiest mission this life has to offer. There is no joy equal to the joy of relieving human suffering.

CATHERINE. But how can you be a secretary of a hospital and a minister of an Episcopal church at the same time?

PAUL (*standing with his back to the fire*). I cannot, so I have arranged to see Dr. Minn this evening in regard to withdrawing from clerical activities. I shan't return to Harvard this Fall.

CATHERINE. I am sure Dr. Minn will be very, very sorry. Is he one of your friends?

PAUL (*less insistently*). Since my father died he has been my best friend. It was through his influence that I went to Harvard as a theological student. Don't you remember the Doctor?

CATHERINE. Yes, indeed. I remember him very well. He was much displeased because I would not join the church, and he said my father was a pagan. He was quite right.

PAUL. He is a gentleman of the old school, Catherine, with decidedly orthodox views; but he has a big, manly heart, I assure you—a man of high ideals.

CATHERINE. I cannot disbelieve it. He used to impress me as being so manly that I always felt an unspeakable satisfaction in being feminine.

PAUL (*turning toward her*). And you are no less womanly than he is manly, notwithstanding you please to be cynical.

CATHERINE. Paul.—You do me a great injustice. We have not seen each other in two years until we arrived here this morning. Consequently, you are pardonable. But please never, never call me womanly again. I am a woman; yes. But a womanly woman—! Ah, how could you think I had fallen so low!

PAUL (*more gravely*). I wish you would not be facetious just now, Catherine. I have something serious to say to you.

CATHERINE (*divining his intention, getting up and walking over to the fire*). I am too old to be serious,

Paul. It is too much to ask of me. I have passed my twenty-fifth year.

PAUL (*reflectively*). True, and I have passed my twenty-eighth.

CATHERINE (*with enchanting placidity*). Is it not delightful to grow old, Paul? As one advances in life one loses the reasonableness of youth, the dull reasonableness that makes life so intolerable. I believe I know less and less as each year goes by.

PAUL (*unwittingly permitting her to divert him from what he intended to say*). Believe me; that is an utter impossibility.

CATHERINE (*with lyrical cadence*). Ah, Paul! You are so discouraging. You are very discouraging. I devote three hours every day to forgetting what I already know. To do so, I think, shows great sympathy with the higher classes.

PAUL (*tantalized*). Don't you ever get tired of all that flippancy, Catherine?

CATHERINE. Yes—positively exhausted. Sometimes I even try to be clever, but it is extremely dangerous. I am so often . . . entirely understood. (*Paul vigorously pokes the fire in exasperation. Emma comes in.*)

EMMA. It's time they were here. I hope Frank hasn't given up coming to-night.

PAUL. Oh, no! Had he done so he would have telephoned again. Probably the train is delayed. By the way, I must let Dr. Minn know that we shall be a little late. Excuse me. (*He goes out.*)

CATHERINE. Paul has developed into such a gentlemanly fellow, has he not, dear? So very, very nice, and filled with such nice ideals. He is a most marriageable man.

EMMA (*who takes everything that Catherine says good-naturedly; drawing a chair to the other end of the*

table and sitting down). Yes, I think so; and I believe he already intends to marry, too.

CATHERINE. Do you, indeed? I am so glad. I was afraid he might do something serious.

EMMA. Serious? What do you mean by that?

CATHERINE. He is so interested in domestic politics and brotherly love. I was afraid he might join the Woman Suffrage Movement.

EMMA. Do you call that serious?

CATHERINE. Yes. It is the most trivial thing in existence.

EMMA. But while we were at school, dear, you were a staunch defender of the rights of women.

CATHERINE (*sitting at the desk*). Ah, the rights of women; yes. I still stand for the rights of women, Emma. If we were only allowed equal rights we would lessen our power a great, great deal. We have too fine an instinct not to oppose all feminine supremacy. It is the men who thrust responsibilities upon us.

EMMA. Men! Catherine! You know nothing about them. They are not as easily understood as we used to suppose.

CATHERINE. Of course not, dear. That is their chief charm. If we understood them we should pardon all their faults, and then they would desert us entirely.

EMMA (*laughingly*). Oh, come, come, Catherine. You're merely talking for the sake of being clever, just as you did at school. (*Smiling triumphantly.*) But I'm a real married woman now.

CATHERINE (*changing her tone*). Have you, then, found marriage so successful, so charming, so thoroughly satisfactory? (*Emma winces. Pause.*) You know, dear, I have not seen you since your wedding.

EMMA (*equivocally*). I really haven't had time to decide as yet. It's all so strange.

CATHERINE. But at least you have not been disappointed??

EMMA (*hesitatingly*). N-n-no. Your stepfather has been very kind and good to me.

CATHERINE. You know, Emma, you always said that if you married a man with whom you were unhappy, you would leave him without the slightest compunction. I used to think it was so bold of you.

EMMA (*seriously*). Yes; and I say so yet. Without love and happiness any bond would be intolerable. I would never be ruled by custom to—(*starting*). Hark! Didn't I hear the auto? . . . I thought I heard the horn. (*They listen.*)

CATHERINE. I think not. . . . Then your expectations have been realized?

EMMA (*as a woman of experience*). Yes. That is, I am satisfied. But what one expects during the engagement, and what one discovers after the ceremony, I'm convinced, are never the same.

CATHERINE (*rising*). Ah, but would you have it otherwise? Would you deny people at least one great surprise in life?

EMMA. Then you still hold your old cynical views on marriage?

CATHERINE. No, indeed. I abandoned them long ago. Cynicism is extremely shallow, dear, and very, very vulgar. I seldom think about marriage now. It is such a hackneyed theme. Even philosophical people have opinions about it. (*She sits down by the fire.*)

EMMA. You're hopeless, Catherine. You're as hopeless as Frank was when he wrote that impossible book.

CATHERINE. You and Frank were very friendly at the time, were you not, dear? (*Emma blushes.*)

EMMA. We've always been friendly. You, and Paul, and Frank and I grew up like brothers and sisters. (*Sadly.*) It seems like only yesterday since we used to romp in the fields and play hide-and-go-seek

in the stable. Don't you wish we were children again, Catherine?

CATHERINE. No . . . I do not. Childhood is so uncompromising.

EMMA (*rising, continuing without thought of Catherine's reply*). Ah, but how we enjoyed life then! Every minute was a long holiday. And then, when you used to come home to visit your mother, and Frank and Paul and I came to spend our Christmas vacation with you—wasn't it glorious! The skating and the coasting—! (*Reflectively*.) Little did I think then that I should some day be mistress of this house.

CATHERINE. Really? I always anticipated it. I quite expected it. Though I did not think you would be Mrs. William Wendell.

EMMA (*coloring*). Oh, you mean Frank. Childhood love affairs seldom come to anything.

CATHERINE. That is why I expected it. Only the——

EMMA. Listen! (*An approaching automobile is heard.*) There they are!

PAUL (*coming in*). Frank is here. His father must have missed him, as he came in a hack. (*Emma goes to the window and draws the curtain. Catherine rises.*)

EMMA. And here comes his father. (*Excitedly.*) I'm so glad Frank has come.

PAUL. He doesn't know about the dinner, does he?

EMMA. No. It is to be a surprise.

CATHERINE. Ah, yes; I had quite forgotten the dinner. I do hope you will give me poached eggs and milk, as usual, dear. Course dinners have become so commonplace nowadays that even the most fastidious people eat them.

EMMA (*still at the window*). Certainly, if you wish. They're coming in now.

A VOICE (*in hall*). I'm sorry I missed you, Frank.

The spark gave out just before I reached the station. (*Paul starts toward the door. Catherine and Emma follow. Frank and the Colonel enter.*)

PAUL. Welcome home, old fellow!

FRANK (*as they shake hands*). This is a surprise. I'm glad to see you, Paul. And you here, too, Catherine!

CATHERINE. How do you do, Frank?

FRANK (*seeing Emma*). Why, Emma! (*Taking both her hands; to the Colonel.*) I had no idea you had assembled a party. (*To Emma.*) When did you come?

COLONEL. Didn't you get my letter about the wedding?

FRANK (*turning towards him*). No. What wedding?

EMMA (*somewhat confused*). I have been here six months, Frank. You must call me mother now.

FRANK (*as the truth dawns on him; trying to conceal his agitation*). Oh! Have you—have you married my father?

COLONEL (*annoyed*). Yes. I wrote to you last April, before the wedding, saying Miss Fallington and I were to be married.

FRANK (*recovering himself*). I didn't get it. Last April I went to Venice, but all my mail was forwarded to Rome, so that I received no letters at all.

COLONEL. That explains it, then. I could not understand why you had not replied.

PAUL (*reassuringly*). It has turned out just as well. Frank has been all the more pleasantly surprised. Haven't you, old fellow?

FRANK (*sardonically*). Oh, of course. Very pleasantly surprised.

COLONEL (*sitting down*). Well, Frank; it's good to have you back again. Moreover, I'm glad to hear you obtained your diploma with honors. I heard, in-

directly, through the Vice-President, that you had done very brilliant work as a bacteriologist. (*Catherine and Emma sit down.*)

FRANK. Yes, I got through the course all right.

PAUL. So now you are a full-fledged doctor. I suppose you can begin to practice at once?

FRANK. Yes, I passed the state examination before I left. But I've almost decided to give up medicine.

PAUL (*expostulating*). Believe me, you must not think of that.

FRANK (*with surprise, scating himself*). Why not?

COLONEL. What else would you take up, instead?

FRANK. I am thinking of giving my entire attention to biology.

PAUL. But that kind of work is practically without remuneration, Frank.

FRANK. I know it.

PAUL. And surely you wouldn't be satisfied unless you earned your living, even if you are financially independent?

FRANK. Yes, I would. To earn one's own living is no guarantee of one's usefulness to society.

PAUL (*desperately attempting to prevent him from upsetting the Colonel's plans*). Excuse me for saying so, old fellow, but living on one's income is very close to parasitism.

CATHERINE. Of course, Paul, Frank should not neglect his idling. I think there are far too many people earning their own living nowadays. It shows such an aristocratic desire for personal ease. It is a great, great deal more difficult to do nothing at all. (*Frank smiles.*)

FRANK. I did not exactly mean that, Catherine. I don't consider scientific work to be a waste of time.

CATHERINE. Even so, it would give you an opportunity to do marvelous things. You might discover that Adam and Eve were really most virtuous ances-

tors, after all. It would be such a comfort to be assured that morals are declining.

COLONEL. Hm! Hm! Do just as you please, Frank, but it is hardly judicious to spend six years of your life in fitting yourself for a profession, and then to abandon it without a trial. Men rarely succeed who adopt that course.

FRANK. I'm sorry if you are displeased. As yet I have not determined on anything definite.

COLONEL. Well, you are of age now, and must decide for yourself. However, I wish to advise you whenever you have anything important under consideration. We shall talk about it later.

EMMA (*to the Colonel*). Frank knows nothing about the dinner to-morrow. Perhaps he will change his mind in the meantime.

FRANK. What dinner is that?

COLONEL. A dinner your stepmother is giving in honor of your birthday. We had planned it as a surprise, but, as she has mentioned it herself, I may as well tell you.

PAUL (*looking at his watch*). By the way, Colonel, it's half-past eight. Hadn't we better start for the rectory?

COLONEL (*rising*). By George, that's so! I had forgotten all about it.

PAUL. I must apologize, Frank, for carrying your father off this way. We didn't expect you until to-morrow, and I made an engagement for this evening that we cannot very well break. You'll excuse us, won't you?

FRANK (*who has risen*). Certainly. By all means.

COLONEL. Anything you want, Frank—cigars or anything else—call Augustus.

FRANK. Thanks. (*They go out. Frank is occupied with his own thoughts.*) Business engagement, I suppose?

EMMA. Yes, and you are concerned, too.

FRANK (*coming out of his reverie*). I am concerned? In what way?

EMMA. I mustn't tell you now. It's a secret until to-morrow. . . . Your father will tell you then.

FRANK. Oh, I see. (*Pause. As an idea comes to him.*) Catherine, I brought a French translation of the verses you wrote in Paris.

CATHERINE. That was very kind of you, indeed. Have you it with you?

FRANK. Yes, I have it in my suit-case. (*He goes out and comes back immediately with a traveling bag, which he opens.*) Here it is. (*He takes out a small volume and hands it to her.*)

CATHERINE (*turning the pages*). Thank you, Frank. Thank you very much. Did you translate the verses yourself?

FRANK. Yes. You undoubtedly want to read them at once, so don't let me detain you.

CATHERINE. I should like to read them (*she starts to go out*).

EMMA (*fearfully*). But surely they will keep until to-morrow, dear. We haven't seen Frank for an awfully long time, so let's have a talk before the men get back.

CATHERINE. Aside from the verses, Emma, I have some very, very pressing notes to write. Detestable task, writing social notes.

FRANK. I thought you never wrote them?

CATHERINE (*as she is leaving the room*). I merely do it for intellectual discipline. I find it so much easier to write transcendental philosophy afterwards.

FRANK (*facing Emma, looking straight at her, and speaking slowly, in a lowered tone*). How could you do it, Emma? How could you do it?

EMMA (*angrily*). You had no right to send Catherine out of the room like that. What will she think?

FRANK. I didn't send her out, but I do want to

talk to you. I never was so astounded in my life as when you told me you were my stepmother.

EMMA. I don't know why you should be. Why shouldn't I marry your father? (*He shuts the door.*)

FRANK (*forcefully*). Emma! do you ask me that? You—the one girl whom I have idolized all my life? (*She wavers.*) You (*with a change of tone*)—you never really cared for me? Our companionship was nothing more to you than a mere flirtation?

EMMA (*moved*). For Heaven's sake, don't go on like that, Frank. You know that is not so.

FRANK (*rapidly walking about*). Then why have you done this? Why did you forsake me in this way?

EMMA. I didn't forsake you. Don't call it that, Frank.

FRANK. Then what do you call it?

EMMA. You were the one who left me. During the two years you were gone you wrote to me only three times, and not in one letter did you——

FRANK (*interrupting*). I seldom write letters. You know I have always considered it a waste of time. I have been working, Emma, working hard, and I expected you to share the results of what I had done.

EMMA. You never said anything definite, Frank; you never did. Of course, as children we promised to marry, but I attached no importance to that.

FRANK. I never formally proposed to you, because I didn't suppose it was necessary. All our lives we have been constant comrades. (*Gloomily.*) Your feelings toward me must have changed.

EMMA. Why do you say so?

FRANK. Because there can be no other explanation. (*With painful emotion.*) Great God! How could you be what you have been to me and then do this? (*Brokenly, dropping into a chair.*) Emma! Emma! I can't understand why you did it. (*Short silence.*)

EMMA (*moving toward the settee*). Do you really

want to know? Do you want me to forget my pride and tell you the most humiliating event in my life?

FRANK (*staring in front of him*). I can't comprehend it.

EMMA (*quietly*). Very well; I will tell you.

FRANK (*looking up*). What?

EMMA. Since my father's death our family has been in actual want. Although Paul did not know it, mother and I went without coal last winter to pay his college tuition.

FRANK (*springing up*). You, Emma—in want—! You married for money!

EMMA (*with pride*). I did not marry for money, Frank. I married for bread.

FRANK. Wouldn't anyone loan you money? Couldn't you have written to me?

EMMA (*turning away*). No, I could not beg.

FRANK. To me it wouldn't have been necessary. . . (*Walking about.*) And now we are in a pretty mess. (*He becomes lost in thought. Short silence.*)

EMMA (*sadly*). Oh—Frank!

FRANK (*quickly*). What?

EMMA (*startled*). Nothing. I was just thinking. . .

FRANK (*pressing her*). What were you thinking?

EMMA (*relapsing into resignation*). Nothing, nothing . . . no matter.

FRANK (*as one who has come to a resolution; walks over and stands squarely in front of her, compellingly*). Do you or do you not love me, Emma? Do you or do you not care for me as I care for you? Answer me.

EMMA. Yes;———but it's too late now. We must make the best of it, Frank. We can at least be old comrades again.

FRANK (*with decision*). No, it is not too late. We love each other—that is enough.

EMMA (*turning pale*). Frank!———What do you mean?

FRANK. I mean you have said you love me, and I love you, and (*hoarsely*) I want you.

EMMA (*greatly agitated*). Are you mad? I'm your father's wife! Stop! Frank. What are you saying?

FRANK (*with somewhat less vehemence*). What is my father to me? I've scarcely lived three months with him in ten years.

EMMA. You must never talk that way to me again. (*Also, more calmly.*) Your father intends to do great things for you.

FRANK (*moving up and down the room*). I'm not interested in what he intends to do for me. I want nothing from him. I don't want to talk about him. (*Violently.*) Why should I be awed by the name of father?

EMMA. Do, for mercy's sake, stop such talk, or— (*He looks at her piercingly.*) Frank! don't look at me like that.

FRANK (*sits down, speaking slowly and lugubriously*). Can you guess what I thought when I left Paris ten days ago?

EMMA (*standing by the table, wearily*). No.

FRANK (*gazing blankly at the floor, continuing*). I thought I was coming home to marry the girl I loved . . . the little girl that loved me.

EMMA (*touched*). You thought you were coming home to marry me? . . . If you had said something before you went away . . .

FRANK (*rising*). If! If! If! (*He throws himself on the settee. Emma goes over and puts her hand on his shoulder.*)

EMMA. Poor Frank!

FRANK. How are we going to act toward each other in the future? Do you expect me to call you (*sardonically*) mother?

EMMA. Not when we are alone. Then we—I sup-

pose we shall act as we always have. But when your father is present, maybe it would be better.

FRANK (*rising*). So—you are not even free to acknowledge your name.

EMMA (*walking away*). No, that isn't it; but you do owe something to your father, Frank. Remember, he is your father.

FRANK. I shall not forget that. He has come between me——

EMMA (*interrupting*). And you blame him? Do you suppose he knew anything about us?

FRANK. No. I blame you—not him.

EMMA. You—are right, Frank, but——

FRANK. I suppose you mean that I should spare you all reproaches. Did you spare yourself? or me?

EMMA. Perhaps not; and isn't that all the more reason why you should be kind to me now? Until to-night I have not been utterly wretched.

FRANK. You were satisfied to marry my father?

EMMA. As satisfied, I think, as the average woman is. I have—— (*A knock.*)

FRANK (*in a whisper*). Who is it?

EMMA. Augustus. Come in. (*Augustus enters.*)

AUGUSTUS. Do you wish the partridges for breakfast, ma'am?

EMMA. Yes; broiled.

AUGUSTUS. Thank you, ma'am. (*He goes out and closes the door.*)

EMMA. You see, Frank, I have things to do. We must stop this dreaming.

FRANK. Great God! Emma—do you think a man's affection is like a coat, that he can put on and yank off at will?

EMMA. No, I don't suppose it is. But in the meantime who is to attend to this house?

FRANK (*with anger*). Very well. If I'm a secondary consideration to a well-kept household I will

not trouble you further. (*Starting to go.*) I will leave to-morrow on the nine o'clock train.

EMMA (*stopping him*). Frank! No! You mustn't say that. You—must not do it!

FRANK (*by the door*). So you wish me to remain here, as a nice, dutiful stepson?

EMMA (*close to him*). I cannot bear to have you angry with me, Frank. But what else can we do?

FRANK (*coming back to the table*). Nothing, unless you will help me. And if not, and you really care for me, you will find this is only the prelude to a life of unending regret.

EMMA (*in a strained voice*). Then you will make it so.

FRANK. No. I would make it bright and happy. I would learn with you the joy of the fullness of life.

EMMA (*with half-closed eyes*). If I will give in to you and be untrue——

FRANK (*interrupting*). Don't go all over that moral nonsense again, Emma. You know you don't feel it.

EMMA. But what will people say if——

FRANK. Ah, you're afraid?

EMMA (*frankly*). Yes, I am afraid. How could I bear dishonor?

FRANK (*misunderstanding her*). But it's not dishonorable. It is fulfilling the dictates of nature.

EMMA. Yes, yes, I know. You would go free. But me, Frank; think of the position I would be in if——

FRANK (*realizing that he is victorious*). I'll attend to that. You'll come, then—you will trust yourself to me. (*She nods. He takes her in his arms.*) Emma! Emma! (*Hurriedly.*) I will see my father to-morrow and tell him we are going to the city. There we can decide where to go. Say no more about it.

EMMA (*apprehensively*). But—— (*Paul comes in.*)

As the door opens they hastily separate, but not before Paul has caught a glimpse of Emma in Frank's embrace.) Oh, Paul! how you startled me!

FRANK (*trying to conceal his excitement*). Was Minn out?

PAUL (*ignoring what he has seen*). No; we ran out of oil. Believe me, I hope I'm not intruding?

EMMA (*as she puts a book in the bookcase*). Why, Paul! What a funny thing to say. Where's the Colonel?

PAUL. Your husband became very angry at the chauffeur and had a sinking spell. He is lying on his couch.

FRANK. A sinking spell!

EMMA. It's his heart. He's had them before, but the doctor says they're not serious. The anger is what did it.

FRANK. I shall see if I can do anything for him. He may need some medicine. (*He goes out. Emma starts to follow.*)

PAUL. Er—Emma. (*She stops.*) I see you and Frank got along very nicely whilst we were away.

EMMA (*slightly embarrassed*). Yes. We were talking about German literature, and Frank was describing a thrilling scene from Sudermann's *Regina* just as you came in. I'm going upstairs now. (*On her way out.*) It's getting late. Remember, unless it rains we're going fishing at seven o'clock. Aren't you going to bed?

PAUL (*sitting down at the table*). I shall wait for Frank.

EMMA. Oh, I wouldn't wait for him. He must be tired after his trip, and if you keep him up to-night he won't want to get up in the morning.

PAUL (*picking up a magazine*). I shall be up directly. (*She goes out.*)

ACT II.

The same room next morning. The curtains, which were closed last night, are now drawn. Through the windows can be seen a heavy rain storm, while the moaning of the wind is occasionally heard. Augustus is making a fire on the hearth. Frank, with muddy trousers and disordered dress, comes in. He acts like a man in a trance, and plainly shows that he is mentally upset.

AUGUSTUS. Good-morning, Mr. Frank.

FRANK (*in a hollow voice*). Good-morning.

AUGUSTUS. Your father, sir, was wondering why you had not eaten breakfast.

FRANK. Has breakfast been served? What time is it?

AUGUSTUS. Yes, sir. Half past eight.

FRANK. Has Miss Fall——Has Mrs. Wendell come down yet?

AUGUSTUS. No, sir. She had breakfast served in her room.

FRANK (*to himself*). Oh!

AUGUSTUS. Beg pardon, Mr. Frank?

FRANK. Nothing. (*He sits down, and becomes oblivious to his surroundings. Catherine enters dressed for riding.*)

CATHERINE. Ah! good morning, Frank. (*Augustus, who has lighted the fire, goes out.*) Your father fears your unpunctuality to breakfast may cause comment in the kitchen. Servants are so hypercritical nowadays. Where have you been?

FRANK (*rising, momentarily pulling himself together*). Out for a walk. I'm not hungry.

CATHERINE. Frank, you are in an unpardonable condition. Look at yourself. It is an error in dress to appear that way before ten o'clock in the evening. It does not make the slightest impression to be unkempt in the morning. Nearly every one is unkempt in the morning. (*Looks at him closer; more gravely.*) You are in pain, Frank. You are in mental pain. (*Frank walks to and fro. Catherine pauses sympathetically.*) Can I help you?

FRANK. No; I'm afraid not.

CATHERINE. I did help you once, Frank.

FRANK (*affectionately*). Yes, I was a foolish boy then . . . but now the case is different.

CATHERINE. Yesterday I expected that this morning I should have a long, long talk with you. I thought we would talk to one another as we did during the evenings in Paris. I did not think you were coming home to be unhappy.

FRANK (*stopping*). No; nor did I. Where are the rest?

CATHERINE. Your father and Paul are at the breakfast table. Emma has not come down. She says she has a severe headache.

FRANK (*appealingly*). You will understand me, Catherine. You have always been more than a sister to me. Before I went away——

CATHERINE. Yes; I know all about it, Frank.

FRANK (*astonished*). You know? Has Emma told you?

CATHERINE (*smiling at his naïveté as she seats herself by the table*). No, indeed. Emma has not told me. Emma is not the kind of a woman to take me into her confidence. She is very, very reticent.

FRANK. How do you know, then?

CATHERINE. I feel, Frank. I am a woman. Did

you not think I knew you wished me to leave the room last night?

FRANK. You were right.

CATHERINE. And did you not know I divined your intentions?

FRANK. No.

CATHERINE. My dear Frank, you are so unsophisticated. A sister sees her brother completely upset by the news of a woman's marriage. The woman's husband and the brother go out to keep an engagement. The brother of the observing sister offers her a book and tells her not to let him detain her. She withdraws. What do you think she would think?

FRANK (*walking about*). You seem to be always right, Catherine. . . She has consented to go with me.

CATHERINE (*rising*). Openly? She has consented to go with you openly?

FRANK (*stops*). Yes.

CATHERINE. Are you sure? Are you quite, quite sure?

FRANK (*annoyed*). Haven't I said so? Why should she lie about it?

CATHERINE. If it will afford you any joy, I am very, very glad. (*Resting her hand on his shoulder.*) You are one of the few that are really akin to me, Frank. When do you go?

FRANK (*commencing to walk again more rapidly*). That's the trouble. I don't know whether I shall go or not. This blood curdling relation to my father! (*Less vehemently.*) I have never considered myself vacillating, and yet I hesitate.

CATHERINE. Are you restrained by duty? Are you restrained by a sense of filial honor?

FRANK. You know I am too advanced for that. No; it is my superior intellect that allows me even to consider action. (*To himself.*) Was a man ever placed in such a situation!

CATHERINE. You are speaking of what makes you hesitate, are you not, Frank?

FRANK (*gloomily*). Yes.

CATHERINE. I do not know the cause of that. There are some things that even women can not divine.

FRANK (*hastily*). I had forgotten. I have not told you. Last night my father became very angry at the chauffeur and had an attack of heart dilatation. He has been subject to these attacks for over a year.

CATHERINE. Ah, he has heart trouble?

FRANK. Yes; his heart is in bad shape.

CATHERINE. I did not know it. Neither he nor Paul mentioned the fact at breakfast.

FRANK. It seems he's very sensitive about having it discussed.

CATHERINE. Now I understand why you hesitate. The shock might be serious?

FRANK. Exactly. It might kill him instantly. Now you see the situation.

CATHERINE (*unimpressed*). Yes.

FRANK. I dreamed last night that I told him the whole affair; how poverty had forced her to accept his offer of marriage.

CATHERINE. Ah!

FRANK (*continuing*). He drew a revolver, but before he could shoot he fell dead at my feet. Then his corpse immediately arose, and that stark, cold, stiff thing followed me whenever I moved. He always seemed about to say: "Dishonored. Dishonored. Dishonored." God, it was horrible!

CATHERINE. Dreams usually are unpleasant. In dreams the worst invariably occurs. But surely a dream could not influence you, could it, Frank?

FRANK (*shuddering*). It was horrible! It is horrible to think about. . . . To give her up or perhaps be my father's murderer.

CATHERINE (*standing with her back to the writing*

desk). To hesitate is to experience twofold agony . . . and it is dangerous. He who hesitates is in danger of succumbing to reason. It is much better to yield or to act at once.

FRANK. I know it; and I'm trying to make up my mind which to do. (*Going to her.*) You, Catherine, are my friend and my sister. To me you have always resembled a Greek goddess. You look upon men and women as mere dogs and cats. What would you do in my place?

CATHERINE. My dear Frank: compared with the average woman I am a goddess. Compared with the woman even a little above the average, I am a goddess. Still, I can not advise you. I can not put myself in your place. You are one individual; I am another. You must do it all yourself. You must be a god or you must be a man. Gods, from of old, have done their will. Man, on the contrary, has usually submitted to custom. To will and do is godly. To contemplate and submit is manly. The occasion calls upon you to make a choice.

FRANK (*moving about*). Then I must either put myself on record as the most monstrous fiend that ever lived, or acknowledge to myself that I am a weakling and a coward.

CATHERINE. Precisely. Although to be considered a monstrous fiend is not so bad after all. It usually signifies that one has not been found out. To be found out—to expose one's weakness—is the greatest tragedy. It uncovers one's delicate soul to the vandalism of the multitude.

FRANK. Maybe it does, Catherine. But I can not dissemble. I simply can't do it. There is no use in my trying to wear a mask or—— (*He stops.*)

CATHERINE. I find I am compelled to wear a mask. I must mask my personality in order to live. I must conceal myself in order to live among my friends.

FRANK (*despondently*). Yes, you do it successfully, and I almost envy you. But I simply can't do it. If I could I should consider a liaison. But how could I then speak to my father again!

CATHERINE. You are too noble to do that, Frank. Needless deception is unworthy of you. At the same time, I warn you not to show your feelings too plainly. (*Meditatively.*) . . . Are you quite sure Emma is worthy of the youth which you are going to give her? Are you sure you are not forming a *mésalliance*?

FRANK (*incensed*). Yes. At least I think I'm capable of deciding whom I want.

CATHERINE (*gracefully balancing herself on the arm of a chair*). I did not mean to cast a reflection on Emma. I admire her extremely. I did not think she had sufficient courage to yield to you. For you, Frank, she is sacrificing a great, great deal. She is a girl who has always held in the highest esteem all the conventional values of life.

FRANK. I know it, and she is waiting for me to make the necessary arrangements. I told her I would see my father to-day. If I fail to keep my promise now she will despise me.

CATHERINE. Does she know about the condition of his heart? Does she know that the shock might be serious?

FRANK (*recoiling*). I had almost forgotten that myself. No, she does not. (*Sarcastically.*) His doctor assured her there was not the slightest danger from the attacks.

CATHERINE. And do you realize that by telling your father you would be in danger? Have you forgotten that in his youth he killed a man? Have you forgotten that in his youth he killed a man for insulting your grandmother?

FRANK. Yes, I had; but——

CATHERINE (*reflectively*). The publicity it gave him was the commencement of his political career.

FRANK. I am not concerned for myself; but dare I risk being the murderer of him who gave me life? (*Walks about clenching and wringing his hands.*) Oh, God! Catherine! That thought nearly drives me out of my mind.

CATHERINE (*calmly*). You are the author of a book, Frank. A book that denies the existence of honor. Are you afraid of your own conclusions?

FRANK (*almost in a whisper*). You would have me tell him?

CATHERINE. I would have you do what you will, Frank—or, rather, I would have you do what you can.

FRANK. But honor is one thing, and playing with a father's life is another. I can not feel that they are the same. (*Pause.*)

CATHERINE. Would it not lessen the risk if you waited a little while? If you waited a few days would he not be stronger than he is now?

FRANK. No; there is no more danger now than there would be at any future time.

CATHERINE. Then you are not sure that the disclosure will do him any harm?

FRANK. I can tell nothing about it. It might not—and then it might snuff him out like that. (*Snaps his fingers. Sardonicly, pacing in front of the fireplace.*) Joyful home coming! As you would say, "A very, very delightful family reunion." . . . And then, to make matters worse, Paul surprised us last night. He evidently suspects the truth.

CATHERINE. Ah! Did he overhear you? Did he overhear what was said?

FRANK. No, but he saw us very close to each other.

CATHERINE. How did that happen?

FRANK. He came upon us unawares. But that does not matter, as he knows nothing with certainty.

CATHERINE. Still, you say he suspects?

FRANK. Yes.

CATHERINE. Then he is sure to do something. You know he has ideals. Ideals are dangerous. Ideals are exital.

FRANK. He wouldn't dare to interfere——

CATHERINE. But you are thinking of interfering with your father, Frank. Why should Paul not interfere with you?

FRANK. Do you consider what I thought of doing to be as contemptible as for Paul to interfere with Emma and me?

CATHERINE. No, indeed. Your interference would be actuated by desire. Desire is natural. Desire is healthy. It signifies growth and development. Paul's interference would be actuated by the ideal of duty. Duty is a faith that is hostile to life. Duty is a belief that all men should act alike. Those who are possessed by the idea are like insane men with a life-sucking passion. They would—— (*Paul enters.*)

PAUL (*to Catherine*). The groom has a horse saddled at the door. Surely you are not going to ride on a morning like this. It's pouring rain.

CATHERINE (*in her usual tone*). Yes, Paul. I have a non-shrinkable riding habit. It was made in Paris. In France they make much better clothes than in America. (*To Frank.*) I shall be back in half an hour. (*She goes out.*)

PAUL (*with marked deliberation*). I waited to see you last night, but you did not come back.

FRANK (*vainly trying to appear indifferent*). No, I went to bed.

PAUL (*facing him with constrained equanimity*). Believe me, Frank, I shall not enjoy what I have to say. Nevertheless, I must have a talk with you.

FRANK (*slightly trembles, sits down to conceal his agitation*). I am at your disposal.

PAUL. You are doubtless aware that I found you and my sister in rather an unseemly attitude last night. I should like to have you tell me what it meant.

FRANK (*under better control, rising*). Paul, that's rather a broad insinuation. What am I to infer from it?

PAUL. I think we thoroughly understand each other. You are to infer that I want an explanation.

FRANK. You are decidedly presumptuous, to say the least. Why should you assume that my conduct needs an explanation?

PAUL. You are avoiding the question. Why should you embrace your father's wife?

FRANK (*walking away*). I permit no man to cross-question me. (*Colonel comes in.*)

COLONEL (*annoyed because Frank did not come to breakfast*). We have all finished breakfast, Frank, and the servants are waiting to go on with their regular work.

FRANK. I am sorry if I have caused any inconvenience. I don't care for any breakfast this morning.

PAUL. That is strange.

COLONEL. Then I wish you would tell—— (*Augustus enters.*) Well?

AUGUSTUS. Dr. Minn wishes to speak to you over the telephone, sir.

COLONEL (*as he goes out*). You may clear the table, Augustus.

AUGUSTUS (*following him*). Yes, sir.

PAUL (*after they are out of hearing, in a lowered voice*). I am sorry to be obliged to do so, but, in the interest of decency, I must investigate this affair to the very bottom.

FRANK. If you persist in your insinuations, Falington, we are likely to have trouble.

PAUL. Just as you please, Wendell; however, I

should rather avoid it. Nevertheless, I do insist upon knowing what occurred last night.

FRANK (*as if condescending to answer him*). I believe you have already questioned your sister; in which case, if she answered at all, she has told you the truth. (*Moving toward the door.*) I'm not going to allay your idiotic suspicions.

PAUL (*blocking the way*). She told me some preposterous story about your describing a theatrical scene. But as I came into the room both of you looked the incarnation of guilt. (*Less antagonistically.*) Do you realize, Frank, that what I saw was suggestive of the basest treachery to your own father? If you have committed an indiscretion, reparation should be made at once. If you will tell me about it, I will talk the matter over with you and be your friend. I say that, Frank, because, by confessing a forbidden desire, one is in less danger of giving way to it.

FRANK (*sitting on the table, contemptuously*). So you wish to be my confessor?

PAUL. There is no need to cast a reflection on my offer to help you. And if you knew all I have done to restore peace between you and your father, you would understand my motive. Will you let me be your friend?

FRANK (*getting off the table*). No, I'm getting tired of your accusations, Fallington. Mind your own damned business; attend to your paradise studies, and let me alone.

PAUL (*enraged*). Your present attitude, instead of being satisfactory, confirms my first opinion. You not only refuse to explain your conduct of last night, but you—you—— You should not be allowed to stay in this house, and if necessary to guard my sister's purity and the name of Colonel Wendell, I shall tell your father the whole affair.

FRANK (*quickly*). Do you know what the result of that might be?

PAUL. Yes; it would be rather unpleasant for you.

FRANK (*quietly*). The excitement might cause his death. My father has a bad case of heart dilatation.

PAUL. A fabrication of that kind will not prevent me from doing my duty.

FRANK. But I give you my word as a physician that you would be putting his life in jeopardy.

PAUL. I don't believe you. (*Suddenly, as a thought comes to him.*) Perhaps you frightened my sister with that same lie to keep her from showing you the door last night?

FRANK (*threateningly*). You miserable old woman! I have half a mind——

PAUL. I will see her at once. (*Hurriedly leaves the room.*)

FRANK. Stop! This meddling of yours has gone far enough. (*He hurries after Paul. The Colonel returns with the morning mail; sits down at the desk and opens letters. Presently Frank comes back.*)

COLONEL (*who has recovered from the annoyance caused by Frank's failure to appear at breakfast, looking up*). Don't go away, Frank. I want to see you. (*He finishes reading the letter.*) Where's Paul?

FRANK (*diffidently*). Gone out. How are you feeling?

COLONEL. Remarkably well. The attack last night was very severe, but the medicine you gave me seemed to be just what I needed. My heart is apparently normal this morning.

FRANK. If you will open your vest, I should like to listen.

COLONEL (*rising*). I intended to talk with you about my condition.

FRANK (*places his ear over his father's heart; straightening up*). A little irregular, but nothing unusual.

COLONEL. As I did not wish to alarm your step-

mother, I had our family physician tell her that these sinking spells did not portend anything serious. But, Frank, they are getting worse. Each attack is more severe than the one which preceded it, and I should like to have your advice. As I told you last night, I have been treated for eight months by a specialist in town, without any apparent results.

FRANK. If you will permit me, I shall ask my old professor at Yale to come to see you. He can give you the best advice obtainable. In the meantime, I should advise you to avoid all excitement.

COLONEL. Then you do not think you are competent to handle my case?

FRANK. I'd rather not.

COLONEL (*lighting a cigar*). When will you write to your professor?

FRANK (*restlessly moving about*). To-day. He lives in New Haven, and comes to the city weekly, so he'll probably be out here soon.

COLONEL. Very well. We shall say no more about it. It isn't pleasant to talk about one's infirmities, so let us change the subject. (*Sitting down*). Be seated, Frank. I have something to talk over with you that I originally intended to make known at the dinner to-night.

FRANK (*sits down; nervously plays with his watch chain*). Yes.

COLONEL (*slowly, with forensic eloquence*). Before you left college we had a dissension about your attitude toward long accepted principles of ethics; I might say, your unnatural attitude toward all upright, manly, honest conduct. You said and wrote ineffable things; you associated with low, immoral vagabonds; you showed a positive delight in disregarding all self-respect; in short, you attacked the very foundation on which rest the pillars of society, and that foundation is—honor. (*He pauses. Frank moves uneasily.*)

Honor is the cement that holds together friends, families, communities, nations; yes, mankind itself. Without confidence in, and reliance on each other, civilization would fall to pieces. During your misguided college career, you not only injured yourself, but you also compromised my political standing. My enemies slanderously spread the report that, as a public official, I was so corrupt that my own son had turned against me. Think of it, Frank! At that time I was afraid the breach between us could never be closed. And then the change came. No one will ever know with what pleasure, with what happiness, I first realized that my boy was throwing off the evil spell which unscrupulous scoundrels had cast over him. You did not disclose to me your altered frame of mind, but you stopped your contributions to those poisonous magazines; you associated more and more with reputable people and less and less with murderous revolutionists; you gradually regained your lost virility; in short, you went abroad and made a man of yourself. You are now twenty-three years old, the age at which your mother stipulated you were to receive the deeds of her properties, so I shall give them to you whenever you wish them. What light guided you back, Frank, from—I might say—"The Valley of the Shadow of Death?"

FRANK (*in a strained voice*). My thoughts are not fixed.

COLONEL (*rising*). Well, you are now a son of whom any father might be proud. You are a young man just about to commence your mission in life, after six years of laborious preparation, and that is what I want to discuss with you.

FRANK (*gets up and lights a cigarette*). Certainly, if you wish.

COLONEL (*relighting his cigar*). In consequence of our reconciliation and the brilliant work you have ac-

complished while pursuing your studies, I have decided, after due consideration, to endow a charity institution to be known as Wendell Hospital.

FRANK. That will be a fine thing.

COLONEL. I have already offered Paul the position of secretary, which he has accepted. We went to see Dr. Minn in regard to the matter last night.

FRANK. Oh, Paul is to be the secretary?

COLONEL. Yes, that is settled. You, of course, will be on the medical staff, which will afford you many opportunities and——

FRANK (*under an intense mental strain, interrupting*). That is very considerate of you, but I must have time to think it over.

COLONEL (*resuming his seat*). That is needless, Frank. There is not the slightest reason for you to think of doing anything except to take your proper place in the institution in due time. As I was about to say, you will practically control the hospital. It will be managed by a board of trustees who will naturally carry out your wishes as far as impartiality will permit. That is, you will be supreme in all moral and ethical questions. I shall make a formal announcement of the plan this evening after dinner. In the meantime, if you wish, you can prepare a speech of acceptance. (*He goes to the desk and looks for something.*)

FRANK (*partly dominated by his father's assurance*). Yes, father; but . . . I—— (*Paul enters.*)

COLONEL (*rising*). I'm glad you've come in, Paul. I was just talking to Frank about the hospital.

PAUL. That is exactly what I want to see you about, Colonel. I must ask you to give me more time to consider before I accept the position of secretary.

COLONEL. That is a most extraordinary request. What has caused you to change your mind?

PAUL. At the risk of offending you, and appearing ungrateful, I must beg you not to ask me just now.

COLONEL. H'm! I must say, Paul, your conduct is rather peculiar.

FRANK. Paul and I had a personal disagreement this morning. Perhaps he wishes me to leave the room (*Starts towards the door.*)

PAUL. No. I cannot stay. I'm waiting to see my sister.

COLONEL. All this is quite beyond my comprehension.

PAUL. May I ask you a seemingly impertinent question, Colonel?

COLONEL. Yes, you may ask——

PAUL. Did your doctor ever say that the sinking spells, to which you are subject, might prove serious?

COLONEL (*irritated*). No sir, he did not. (*Paul turns to go.*) Well?

PAUL. I was sure your son was wrong. He said they were serious. Excuse me. (*He goes out.*)

COLONEL (*walking about*). Why on earth should Paul act like this! And what did he mean by saying that you told him I was in danger from these sinking spells?

FRANK. I told him there was danger from great excitement. He asked me the question.

COLONEL. It is quite evident that something has occurred which you are endeavoring to conceal from me. I demand, sir, to know what it is.

FRANK. Paul has seen fit to——. As he introduced these incoherent intimations, I prefer that you ask him to explain them.

COLONEL. You are obviously concerned in what has occurred as well as he; I repeat, sir, I demand to know what it is. It is my right to be informed of everything that happens in this house.

FRANK (*makes an effort to tell him the truth. Writhes in agony*). You see, father, before I went abroad . . . Emma and I——

COLONEL. Your stepmother; yes.

FRANK. We were friendly—fond of each other.

COLONEL (*annoyed by the suspense*). Well, what has that to do with it?

FRANK (*less excitedly*). Father, now is the time for you to control yourself and avoid overtaking your heart.

COLONEL (*thoroughly enraged*). What are you trying to get at, any way?

FRANK (*with a supreme effort, facing his father*). When I arrived—last night—while—I love your wife. I have told her so, and she's consented to go with me. (*The Colonel staggers against the table. He is too stunned to grasp the situation.*)

COLONEL. Great Christ! What did you say?

FRANK (*master of himself*). I love your wife. She returns my love, and we are going away together.

COLONEL (*realizing what he means*). You miserable, treacherous ingrate! You dare to tell your father——!!! (*He strikes at him. Frank jumps back and avoids the blow. He throws the lamp at him, which narrowly escapes Frank's head and crashes against a bookcase.*)

FRANK (*still keeping at a distance*). I warn you that you are taking chances with your life.

COLONEL (*shaking with rage, in a voice beyond all control*). Get out of my house! Get out I say, before I——!!! I disinherit you—I disown you—I annihilate the very memory of your existence.

FRANK (*on his way to the door*). As you please.

COLONEL. Stop! Before you go I'll cram that perfidious lie down your throat. You flagitious, opprobrious, abhorrent, despicable, abominable cur! By God, I'll make you rue the hour you dared—— (*Paul rushes in. The door closes behind him.*)

COLONEL. Where's my wife?

PAUL (*wrought to the highest pitch of excitement*). She was coming downstairs when she heard the——

COLONEL. Get her at once. (*Paul starts to obey.*) We have a traitor among us. An insidious snake.

PAUL (*as he opens the door*). I see you. You were listening. (*Emma, deathly pale and trembling in every limb, enters. She leans against the wall for support.*)

COLONEL (*confronting her*). Emma, this contemptible dog (*pointing at Frank*) has had the effrontery to tell me that you are going to openly leave me—and go with him. What have you to say?

PAUL. I shall withdraw.

COLONEL. No; remain. Your honor is compromised as well as mine. (*He locks the door. Emma sinks into a chair.*)

FRANK. I protest. Fallington has nothing to do with this affair. We are capable of settling it ourselves without dragging him into it.

COLONEL (*ignoring him*). What have you to say, Mrs. Wendell?

EMMA. Oh dear! (*She bursts into tears.*)

COLONEL (*reeling*). Do you admit it?

FRANK (*stepping between them*). Look here! I won't permit you to bulldoze this woman.

PAUL. I advise you, Wendell, to keep quiet. You've made trouble enough as it is.

COLONEL. Come. I demand the truth. Have you dishonored my name?

FRANK (*threatening his father bodily violence*). I tell you I won't tolerate this cowardly attack. I've already told you the truth. Be a man and deal with me. Don't try to bully this terrified girl. (*The Colonel picks up a heavy chair, with which he attempts to strike Frank. Emma shrieks and covers her face. Paul stops him.*)

COLONEL (*to Frank*). Damn you! If you inter-

fere with me again, I'll break every bone in your body.

PAUL (*trying to force Frank into a seat*). Sit down! (*Frank knocks him down. The Colonel catches Emma by the arms.*)

COLONEL. Speak! Speak! I command you. Have you dishonored me?

EMMA (*screaming with pain*). No—no—no! Frank is wrong.

COLONEL. Do you swear it?

EMMA. Yes. (*He releases her.*)

PAUL (*who has risen, and stands out of Frank's way*). But last——

COLONEL (*turning toward him*). But what?

PAUL. Nothing.

COLONEL (*triumphantly*). Now, you convicted miscreant. (*His anger again overcomes him*). You——! You——! What do you say now?

FRANK (*in an unsteady voice*). You will not go with me, Emma?

EMMA (*looking him straight in the face*). Are you mad?

FRANK (*unable to believe that he has heard aright*). You did not lead me to believe that you would go?

EMMA (*with an attempt at composure*). Certainly not. How could you tell such an untruth? (*Pause. The Colonel and Paul look on critically. Frank struggles with himself, undecided whether to make another attempt to win her, or to acknowledge he was mistaken. He decides on the latter course.*)

FRANK (*in spite of himself, pleadingly*). Emma——

EMMA (*fearing that he will plunge her into further difficulties, interrupting*). Please don't say anything more to me. Please don't . . . don't.

FRANK (*resolved*). I see I was mistaken. (*To his father.*) I am entirely to blame.

COLONEL (*to Emma*). How did all this happen? An explanation is due from you.

EMMA (*rises, speaking with difficulty*). Yes, of course, . . . (*pants for breath*) Frank was under the impression that I was engaged to him . . . while he was at Yale . . . I told him he was mistaken, but he persisted in making love to me. . . . I did not regard him seriously.

PAUL. You did not regard him seriously?

EMMA. No. There had been a great misunderstanding between us. . . . Frank felt very keenly over it . . . so——

PAUL. But——

EMMA (*quickly*). Remember, Paul, I'm his step-mother now. (*Pause.*) I swear I never gave him the slightest reason to believe—— Oh, Colonel, how could you think I could do such a thing? It's monstrous! (*She breaks down and sobs.*)

COLONEL (*pointing to the door*). Go. (*Frank bows and goes out.*)

PAUL (*offering his hand*). Believe me, I scarcely know how to express my sympathy, Colonel.

COLONEL (*taking his hand like a man whose spirit is broken; yet still maintaining his dignity*). Yes, Paul. It is a great blow to me. (*Paul silently leaves the room. Softly.*) Emma.

EMMA (*going to him*). You do believe me? You are not angry with me?

COLONEL. I do believe you, Emma. (*He takes her in his arms.*)

ACT III.

The room as before, one hour later. Emma completely unnerved, lies huddled in a chair. Paul stands by the settee.

PAUL. Yes, this has been a terrible morning, Emma. You have reason to feel miserable.

EMMA (*in a subdued voice*). Oh, Paul! What will happen next?

PAUL (*going to her*). The worst has happened. Now we must see what can be done to mend matters.

EMMA (*half to herself*). If Frank only hadn't— if he only hadn't—

PAUL. I'm satisfied that he is primarily to blame; although, Emma, I'm not entirely satisfied with your explanation. You must remember that I saw you in his arms last night.

EMMA (*defensively*). I could not help it. He is stronger than I.

PAUL. Do you mean he took hold of you against your will?

EMMA (*equivocally*). Why dwell on that?

PAUL (*slowly and deliberately*). Because I do not believe you are perfectly candid with me, Emma.

EMMA (*tearfully*). You aren't fair to me, Paul.

PAUL. Your confusion at the time was very ostensible. (*Short silence.*) If you wish me to try to set things right, you must tell me everything, without reserve.

EMMA. What else is there to tell?

PAUL (*coldly*). You know that better than I do. (*He awaits expectantly. Emma sighs.*)

EMMA. Well, if you must know, he did put his arms around me. As his stepmother I tried to comfort him in his wild infatuation.

PAUL. Only as his stepmother?

EMMA (*reproachfully*). Do you disbelieve me, Paul?

PAUL. I did not say that; but the whole affair has been so scandalous, I don't know what to believe . . . Why were you embarrassed when I came in?

EMMA. You came upon us so suddenly I was frightened, and I instantly realized that you might misconstrue what you saw. That is why I said what I did about Frank's describing a thrilling scene.

PAUL. You told an untruth. That was wrong.

EMMA. I know it, but I was so startled, and you looked so queerly at us—— You do believe me, don't you, Paul?

PAUL. What you say seems reasonable enough. But I assure you, you have acted very unwisely. You must tell your husband the whole truth.

EMMA (*thoroughly alarmed, jumping up*). Paul! No! No! No! That would be fatal.

PAUL. Is truth fatal?

EMMA (*speaking rapidly*). But I could never make the Colonel understand. Do be reasonable. You saw yourself that he was suspicious of my fidelity.

PAUL. How, then, do you expect to have proper relations with the man whom you swore to love and honor, if there is a lie between you?

EMMA (*with dignity*). I did not lie. I told him the truth.

PAUL. Believe me, holding back part of the truth, in a matter of vital importance, is equivalent to a falsehood.

EMMA (*sincerely*). Don't you think I am wretched enough as it is without preaching to me?

PAUL (*turning from her*). I'm afraid, Emma,

your married life has not been what it should be. You do not even call your husband by his Christian name.

EMMA. Is that a crime?

PAUL. No; but you seem to lack the proper confidence. If I am right, if you and your husband have not been as near to each other as you both wish, break down all barriers now, and start afresh. (*With conviction.*) I assure you, the slightest thing withheld from one we love creates a spiritual chasm that can not be crossed.

EMMA (*using all her argumentative forces*). That may be true, Paul, in certain cases, but there are exceptions to all rules. (*Earnestly.*) You must consider what kind of a man the Colonel is. He is older than we, and looks on things differently. He has old-fashioned ideas about propriety; and, although you know the thought of disloyalty never entered my head, I could not tell him what you wish me to reveal and still make him believe in my innocence. (*Pause.*)

PAUL (*after walking about and meditating*). I am a man, Emma, and I have had more experience than you. Also, in my theological studies I have specialized on the moral duties of one human being to another, and I know the inevitable retribution that follows their evasion. Believe me, when you have told your husband the whole truth, you will find you are much happier, and that you have won his entire confidence and affection.

EMMA. But we have not quarreled.

PAUL. Aside from that, you are confronted with a demand of justice. It would be very unjust to Frank not to tell his father that he had some reason for thinking what he said was true. As much as Frank has wronged you, Emma, you have no right to wrong him.

EMMA (*firmly*). I tell you, it is simply out of the question. I will not tell my husband something that may shatter all his happiness.

PAUL (*with determination*). You *must* tell him, Emma. As your brother and your priest, I insist that you tell him.

EMMA (*defiantly*). And if I refuse?

PAUL. I shall be compelled to tell him myself. (*Emma collapses on the settee.*)

EMMA. You don't know what you are doing.

PAUL. I assure you, I know full well. Who shall it be: you or I?

EMMA (*subdued*). Oh, dear! Oh, dear! When must I do it? Not now; I can't tell him now!

PAUL. No; it would not be prudent to tell him in his present condition. Some time in the near future; some time, when you and he are alone, you must tell him in a repentant spirit. Will you promise to do this?

EMMA (*resignedly*). Yes; but if it results in a separation you will suffer also. Remember, I have advanced you considerable money since my marriage.

PAUL (*indignantly*). In the name of Heaven, do you suppose I would consider pecuniary advantages in connection with—— (*He chokes with indignation.*) That is an insult—an insult!

EMMA (*fearfully*). I didn't mean it in that way. I only thought—— Yes, yes, I will tell him. I would do anything to undo what has been done.

PAUL. I did not think you could mean to intimate anything so gross as that I could willingly profit by this situation. You know I will repay every cent at the first opportunity. Have you a memorandum of how much I owe you?

EMMA. Yes; but I'm in no frame of mind to think about it now.

PAUL. You are right. We have graver business to deal with. Notwithstanding Frank's insults and violence, I bear him no ill will, and I should like to see him and his father reconciled.

EMMA (*sadly*). I'm afraid that's impossible.

PAUL. No, it's not impossible. We must persuade the Colonel to accept an apology from Frank.

EMMA. There is nothing I wouldn't do to make peace between them. But (*hopelessly*) it's too late now.

PAUL. I say it is not too late, although we have no time to lose. Frank is preparing to leave within half an hour.

EMMA. What can I do?

PAUL. First of all—— (*The Colonel enters.*) I was just on the point of coming to you.

COLONEL (*going to the desk*). One minute, Paul. I have some papers that belong to—— I have some papers concerning my first wife's property that I wish to give to——

PAUL. Your son.

COLONEL (*taking out an envelope*). No, I have no son. I have disowned him.

PAUL. That is just what Emma and I were talking about.

COLONEL. What do you mean?

PAUL. You and Frank. He has already sent for a carriage.

COLONEL. The sooner he goes the better.

PAUL (*after a moment's hesitation, while the Colonel searches through some documents*). Pardon me, Colonel, for seeming to interfere, but for father and son to separate in this way is terrible. Just consider——

COLONEL (*sternly*). I have considered and decided. Henceforth I am done with him. He has broken all bonds between us by his outrageous conduct.

PAUL. But just consider—he is your own flesh and blood for all that.

COLONEL. Each one of us, Paul, is responsible for his own actions, and not for the actions of those who are related to him by blood. There is nothing more to be said on this painful subject.

PAUL. Let me say this, Colonel, and entreat you to listen to me. Your son and my sister were brought up together. They were playmates in childhood, companions in youth, and—and—I was brought up with them, Colonel, so perhaps I can understand your son's feeling better than you.

COLONEL. Would you excuse or condone filial treachery, the vilest ingratitude of son to father?

PAUL. I excuse nothing; much less do I condone Frank's behavior. At the same time, you cannot say he was altogether treacherous. He told you what he thought was true, and tried to act as honorably as he could in his pathetic misapprehension.

COLONEL (*with increasing vexation, moving about*). Was it an honorable action when he attempted to persuade my wife, his stepmother, to disgrace the ring she wears? Your defense of him is quite beyond my comprehension.

PAUL. In the domain of ethics, Colonel, I know your son has sinned grievously. But if he were to ask your forgiveness, to come to you and say: "Father, I am your wretched and miserable son. Have mercy upon me," I am not sure but that you would also sin if you still disowned him.

COLONEL. According to that, any one could do whatever he chose with impunity, if he only professed his sorrow afterwards. No, as a matter of principle, I could not consider it.

PAUL (*redoubling the insistence of his appeal*). God, the Father of us all, forgives all sinners who truly repent. And Jesus, the Man—I do not speak of Christ, but Jesus, the most perfect and just man that ever trod the earth—forgave the thief on the cross when he asked for pardon.

EMMA (*rising and going to the Colonel, pleadingly*). Yes, Paul is right.

PAUL. And Frank has sinned in thought only; he did not actually sin in deed.

EMMA (*imploringly*). Colonel!

PAUL. I will guarantee an apology from your son. Will you refuse to accept it?

EMMA (*to the Colonel, laying her hand on his shoulder*). No, no; you will not, will you? For my sake don't refuse him that. It would break my heart to think that I had separated father and son. (*Pause. Paul waits confidently.*)

COLONEL (*slowly, to Paul*). How do you know that he will express his regret for what has happened?

PAUL. Believe me, Colonel, I know the human heart. That is one advantage we theologians have.

EMMA (*to Paul*). Shall I send for Frank at once?

PAUL. No, we must see him first. Then, Colonel, will you talk to him?

COLONEL (*conceding*). Since you both wish it, I will hear what he has to say.

PAUL. Thank you, Colonel (*shakes his hand*), thank you. By a little forethought and forbearance we will avert a family disaster.

COLONEL. But bear in mind that I have little faith in his compunction.

PAUL (*ushering the Colonel to the door*). I assure you I shall happily prove that you are in error. Where shall we find you?

COLONEL. I am going to the billiard room.

PAUL. Emma and Frank will be there directly.

COLONEL. If Frank is willing to make atonement, ring, and I shall return. Otherwise I do not care to see him. (*He goes out.*)

PAUL (*coming from the door*). Now, Emma, you must do the rest.

EMMA. Yes, yes; what is it?

PAUL. Frank is naturally angry with me because

I was the first to discover his intentions; but he cares for you. You must point out to him his duty.

EMMA. I'll do my best; but suppose he won't speak to me?

PAUL. He will. Remain here, and I shall have Augustus send him to you.

EMMA. I will do everything in my power. How can I ever repay you for all that you're doing for me?

PAUL. By keeping your promise to tell the whole truth to your husband. There is nothing further for me to do. The rest lies with you, Emma. Don't forget to ring as soon as Frank wishes to see his father. *(He goes out. Emma, now that she is alone, loses her courage. She goes to the door and calls to Paul. He does not answer. She nervously walks about the room and talks to herself. Presently Frank enters.)*

FRANK. You wish to see me, Mrs. Wendell? *(She closes the door.)*

EMMA *(relieved after the suspense of meeting him is over)*. Frank, no doubt you feel very bitter toward me. *(He stands motionless and looks at her.)* Perhaps you have reason. Oh, Frank, Frank! How could we have said and have done what we did last night! I can't realize it—it all seems like a horrid dream.

FRANK. It was quite realistic, Mrs. Wendell.

EMMA. You do feel bitter toward me; you hate me. I shouldn't blame you if you loathed the very sight of me. I lied, Frank. I couldn't help it. I did care for you—but to face public condemnation—to be socially ostracised—— It was brutal of you to expect it of me. Where were your wits?

FRANK. Passion is a serious thing. It does not stop to consider wits.

EMMA. You are so unreasonable—— I never dreamed that you expected me to elope with you.

FRANK *(looking at her in astonishment)*. What

did you expect? (*Pause.*) Is it possible that you didn't understand me?

EMMA (*blushing*). Yes; I did not consent to elope.

FRANK (*a light breaking in upon him*). You thought I meant to take you to the city for a few hours and then bring you home? (*She does not reply.*) I see we did not understand each other—but it is of no consequence now.

EMMA (*sighing*). Yes. I suppose it is all over. Do you despise me, Frank?

FRANK (*coldly*). I'd rather not discuss the matter further. (*She walks thoughtfully to the window and looks out.*)

EMMA (*turning toward him*). I said I was innocent of wrong intent, and you did not deny it. (*Appealingly.*) You will never say anything to the contrary, will you?

FRANK. No; you need not worry about that. Permit me to get the rest of my things. (*He starts to leave the room.*)

EMMA (*going in front of him*). Wait. I have something important to say to you.

FRANK. What is it?

EMMA. After this awful misunderstanding we must do what we can to mend matters.

FRANK. There is nothing for me to do except to leave.

EMMA. Yes, there is; we can do a great deal if you will only help me.

FRANK. I am listening.

EMMA. Paul and your father were talking about you a few minutes ago. At first your father was relentless, but by a strong appeal to his better feelings Paul made him promise to accept your apology.

FRANK (*showing first signs of annoyance*). Paul, Paul, eternally Paul! What has he to do with me?

EMMA. If you but knew it, he is your friend. For my sake, Frank, if not for your own, ask your father's forgiveness. (*Catherine comes in, dressed for the street. She hears Emma's request.*)

FRANK. Never! Not while I have one drop of blood in my veins. (*To himself.*) I want my papers. (*He walks past Emma and touches the electric bell between the windows.*)

EMMA. Catherine—help me to keep him from going away like this.

CATHERINE (*to Frank*). It is so commonplace to quarrel with one's father nowadays. Every one quite expects you to do it. Perhaps you should apologize, Frank, for the sake of individuality.

EMMA. How can you talk like that? Are you absolutely heartless?

CATHERINE. Absolutely? No.

EMMA. I won't believe that you are. (*Be-seechingly.*) Please be my friend now, Catherine. You used to call yourself my friend at school, when I didn't need one.

CATHERINE (*examining a magazine*). Ah, yes. That is the most advantageous time to have friends. Friends—— (*The Colonel enters. Catherine pauses.*)

COLONEL (*to Frank*). Well, sir?

FRANK. I beg your pardon; I rang for Augustus to ask you for my papers.

COLONEL. Your papers? I don't understand. Have you apologized to your stepmother?

FRANK. No.

COLONEL (*surprised*). What are you doing here, then?

FRANK. Your wife sent for me to apologize to you——

COLONEL. Do you wish your sister to withdraw?

FRANK (*continuing*)—which I have not the slightest intention of doing.

COLONEL (*in a rage of disappointment*). Then what do you mean by remaining in my house? I told you to get out an hour ago; do you need assistance?

FRANK. I want the deeds to my mother's properties. I think that's what you called them.

COLONEL (*taking them out of his pocket and throwing them on the table*). There they are. Now, get out. (*Frank starts to go.*)

CATHERINE. Wait a little, Frank. (*He stops at the threshold.*) Colonel Wendell, I wish to thank you for the charming visit I have enjoyed at your home. It has been so delightfully diverting.

COLONEL. Young woman, your remark is a piece of gratuitous impertinence.

CATHERINE. I should not think of being impertinent to you, Colonel. You are so dignified. You are such an accomplished actor. You imitate a gentleman so well. One can never tell when you are serious. (*Frank leaves the room.*)

COLONEL. When you are ready to take your departure, Miss Rapoint, Augustus will order the automobile. (*He goes out.*)

EMMA (*sobbing*). Oh, Catherine! Have you—turned—against me—too?

CATHERINE (*putting on her gloves*). No, indeed, Emma. I am not angry in the least. I admire your courage extremely. It is so brave to be honorable. So very, very intrepid. It is only the weak, vacillating woman that gives in. (*Paul enters.*) I am going now. Good-bye, dear.

PAUL. You have wantonly insulted the Colonel, Catherine.

CATHERINE. My dear Paul, how unkind of you! The Colonel was quite unreasonable. I really do not believe he noticed that I have on a new traveling suit. Do you not like it, Paul?

PAUL. What kind of a creature are you?

CATHERINE. Half divine; half diabolic. (*Frank comes to the door with suit-cases.*)

FRANK. The carriage is here.

CATHERINE. Yes, Frank, I am coming. (*Adjusting her hat in front of the glass over the mantel.*) Are you not going to say good-bye?

FRANK. I think the formality unnecessary.

CATHERINE. How very, very rude of you! Good bye, Paul. Good bye again, dear. (*They go.*)

EMMA (*pitiously, throwing herself on the settee*). I am so miserable; I am so, so miserable.

PAUL (*bending over her*). That will all pass away, dear sister. It might have been a great deal worse. You still have your husband and your honor.

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